

Message Text

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43

ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 ARAE-00 INRE-00 SSO-00 SCS-03 L-02

EB-07 OFA-01 SCA-01 H-02 INR-07 DLOS-03 PRS-01 CG-00

DOT-00 SS-15 NSC-05 NSCE-00 PA-01 USIE-00 PM-03

DODE-00 /062 W

----- 012787

O 121545Z MAR 75

FM AMCONSUL GUAYAQUIL

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 3786

INFO AMEMBASSY QUITO

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 GUAYAQUIL 434

E. O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: EFIS, PFOR, PLOS, SHUM, CASC, EC, US

SUBJ: SEIZED U.S. TUNA VESSEL: MARCH 6 EVENTS ON THE NEPTUNE

1. SWORN STATEMENTS CONCERNING MARCH 6 EVENTS ON NEPTUNE WERE OBTAINED FROM SEVERAL CREWMEN AND MASTER OF VESSEL, JOHN BURICH. COPIES OF THESE STATEMENTS WILL BE POUCHED TO THE EMBASSY AND TO ARA/LA-EP. EXCERPTS FROM THESE STATEMENTS THAT RELATED TO BOARDING OF VESSEL BY ECUADOREAN MILITARY PERSONNEL ARE INCLUDED IN PARA 5 OF THIS MESSAGE.

2. AFTER THE CREW HAD BEEN REMOVED FROM THE VESSEL, THE ECUADOREAN BOARDING PARTY LOTTED THE CREW'S QUARTERS. STATEMENTS CONCERNING STOLEN ARTICLES WERE OBTAINED FROM THE CREW. TOTAL VALUE OF ALL MISSING ITEMS, AS ESTIMATED BY THE CREW, IS SEVERAL THOUSAND DOLLARS. BEFORE THE NEPTUNE DEPARTED, CAPTAIN BURICH WROTE A LETTER TO THE SALINAS PORT CAPTAIN REQUESTING HIS ASSISTANCE IN RECOVERING THE STOLEN ITEMS. I WILL FORWARD THIS LETTER TO THE PORT CAPTAIN. COPIES OF THE STATEMENTS CONCERNING STOLEN ARTICLES WILL BE POUCHED TO THE EMBASSY AND ARA/LA-EP.

3. THE MARCH EVENTS ON BOARD THE NEPTUNE WERE CAUSED BY THE IMMATURITY AND GROSS STUPIDITY OF TWO MEN, JAMES LARKIN, ALTERNATE
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MASTER OF THE NEPTUNE, AND CAPT. GALARZA, COMMANDING OFFICER OF

THE SALINAS NAVAL BASE. LARKIN CAUSED THE INITIAL PROBLEM;
GALARZA MADE A BAD SITUATION MUCH WORSE BY HIS SUBSEQUENT ACTIONS.
THE BEST OF MY KNOWLEDGE, NO FULL INVESTIGATION OF THE
MARCH 6 EVENTS HAS BEEN ORDERED BY THE ECUADOREAN NAVY. ONE
RESULT OF THIS FAILURE TO INVESTIGATE WAS THE POSTING OF THE
PETTY OFFICER, ROBERTO TERAN-PLAZA, WHO HAD LED THE ASSAULT
AGAINST THE NEPTUNE CREW, AS HEAD OF THE ON-BOARD GUARD FORCE
ON TWO OCCASIONS AFTER MARCH 6. (MY STATEMENT CONCERNING THE
MARCH 6 EVENTS AND MY ALTERCATIONS WITH GALARZA WILL BE FORWARDED
TO THE EMBASSY AND ARA/LA-EP.)

4. THE OUTSTANDING PERFORMANCE OF DAO SGT. LUIS ROSARIO WAS
NOTED IN GUAYAQUIL 393. I WOULD ALSO LIKE TO COMMEND THE
SUPERB WORK OF ANGELO FIGUEROA (CONSULAR OFFICER, GUAYAQUIL),
AND JOSEPH MOSS (AID, GUAYAQUIL). THESE TWO MEN WENT ON BOARD
THE NEPTUNE WHEN THE CREW WAS RETURNED ON MARCH 6 AND REMAINED THERE
UNTIL THE GUARDS WERE REMOVED ON MARCH 11. I AM MOST IMPRESSED BY
THEIR COOL AND DECISIVE ACTIONS AS INTERMEDIARIES BETWEEN GUARDS
AND CREWMEN IN A DANGEROUS AND POTENTIALLY EXPLOSIVE SITUATION.

5. GIVEN BELOW ARE EXTRACTS FROM THE STATEMENTS OF NEPTUNE
CREWMEN:

A. CAPT. JOHN A. BURICH (US CIT) MASTER OF NEPTUNE:

"IT IS NOW APPROXIMATELY 1100 HOURS AND WHILE WAITING BY THE RADIO
I NOTICED THROUGH THE PILOT HOUSE WINDOW THAT A CRAFT WAS APPROACHING
THE NEPTUNE WITH SEVERAL OFFICERS IN WHITE UNIFORMS, (NAVAL
OFFICERS), AND I WOULD GUESS APPROXIMATELY 30 OF THEIR SAILORS. THEY
WERE ALL ARMED WITH EITHER RIFLES, AUTOMATIC RIFLES, BAYONETS AND
CLUBS. AS THEY CAME NEAR THE SHIP TO BOARD I WENT TO THE BOARDING
LADDER TO RECEIVE THEM, AND I ASSUMED TO BE TAKEN INTO CUSTODY THE
FIRST ONE TO BOARD WAS A SERGEANT OR PETTY OFFICER WHO DID NOT STOP
NEAR ME TO ASK IF I WERE THE CAPTAIN OR WHERE WAS THE CAPTAIN.
HE RUSHED PAST ME TOWARDS THE CHIEF ENGINEER WHOM I DID NOT REALIZE
WAS STANDING BEHIND APPROXIMATELY 8 OR 10 FEET. HE LUNGED AT THE CHIEF
ENGINEER IN ORDER TO TAKE A SMALL CAMERA THAT THE CHIEF ENGINEER
HAD IN HIS HANDS. THEY INSTANTLY WERE WRESTLING OVER THE CAMERA. I
QUICKLY RUSHED TOWARD THEM TO TRY TO SEPARATE THEM AND SAYING
TO STOP THIS SO THAT WE MAY TALK THINGS OVER. IN THAT SAME INSTANT
RIFLE SHOTS WERE GOING OFF. I MUST ASSUME THE SAILORS WERE FIRING
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SKYWARD SINCE NO ONE WAS WOUNDED BY RIFLE FIRE. MY BEST ESTIMATE IS
THAT APPROXIMATELY 15 ROUNDS WERE FIRED. I DID NOT TURN TOWARDS THE
MEN WITH THE WEAPONS SINCE MY PRIME INTEREST WAS TO SEPARATE THE
CHIEF ENGINEER AND THE PETTY OFFICER IN ORDER TO ESTABLISH TRANQUILL-
ITY. I VERY QUICKLY DISCOVERED I WAS WRONG IN THINKING I COULD
ACCOMPLISH THAT MUCH. ALL OF A SUDDEN THERE WERE SAILORS ALL OVER THE
BOAT WITH RIFLES LEVELED AND POINTED AT ALL OF US. BAYONETS WERE
DRAWN, CLUBS WERE SWINGING. BUTT STROKES BEING APPLIED TO

MY CREW AND MYSELF. PUNCHES WERE THROWN BY THE SAME SAILORS. THEY WERE KICKING US WITH THEIR SHOES ON THE BODY AND HEAD. THE SAILORS WERE OBVIOUSLY DOING AS THEY PLEASED AND IGNORING THEIR COMMANDER WHOM I LATER NOTICED AND WHOM I BELIEVE WAS A LIEUTENANT. THE LIEUTENANT TRIED TO STOP THE BEDLAM BUT HAD NO CONTROL OVER HIS TROOPS. THE PETTY OFFICER SET THE PACE AND THE TROOPS TOOK OVER FROM THERE, AS THEY PLEASED. THE PETTY OFFICER DID MOST OF THE KICKING AND PUNCHING AND STRIKING WITH A .45 CALIBER PISTOL THAT HE HAD. THE PETTY OFFICER PERSONALLY STRUCK ME ABOUT 5 OR 6 BLOWS ON THE BACK, NECK, AND KIDNEYS."

B. STEVEN M. KING (U.S. CIT) CREWMAN

...ABOUT ANOTHER HOUR LATER, THEY CAME BACK WITH ABOUT 30 MEN ARMED WITH RIFLES, PISTOLS, BAYONETS, CLUBS, SAPS, AND NIGHT STICKS. THEY BOARDED OUR VESSEL WITH NO RESISTANCE OFFERED. AS THEY WERE BOARDING A MEMBER OF OUR CREW SNAPPED A PICTURE OF THEM. IN TURN, IT WAS EITHER THE CAMERA, OR THEIR OWN INTENT THAT TRIGGERED THEM INTO A WILD SPREE OF BEATINGS AIMED AT THE CREW. I WAS UNLASHED UPON SEVERAL TIMES WITH RIFLE BUTTS, NIGHT STICKS, KICKS, AND FISTS EVEN THOUGH I WAS DOING EXACTLY AS TOLD AN OFFERING NO RESISTANCE."

C. DON L. BYRD (U.S. CIT.) CHIEF ENGINEER:

"THE NEXT THING I KNEW THE CAMERA WAS RIPPED OUT OF MY HAND LEAVING THE CORD IN MY HAND. SOME CPO DRESSED IN WHITE PULLED HIS .45. I TRIED TO HAND THE CAMERA TO SOMEONE ELSE BUT TO NO AVAIL. THIS CPO THEN STARTED HITTING ME AND EVERYBODY AROUND PUSHING THE CREW FOREWARD AND BEATING SOME RATHER BADLY. I MYSELF WAS KICKED, HIT OVER THE HEAD WITH A CLUB. MY SON WAS HIT ON THE HEAD NAD HE WAS WITH ME AND THEN THEY PULLED HIM AWAY AND

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HIT HIM AGAIN LEAVING HIM SUPER UNSTABLE."

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 GUAYAQUIL 434

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SUBJ: SEIZED U.S. TUNA VESSEL: MARCH 6 EVENTS ON THE NEPTUNE

D. ICK BYRD (U.S. CIT.) CREWMAN:

"SUDDENLY GUARDS CAME FROM ALL SIDES AND STARTED HERDING OUR CREW WITH ANY AVAILABLE MEANS, RIFLE BUTTS, BAYONETS, CLUBS, ANYTHING. I WENT TO MY DAD'S SIDE, BUT NOT BEFORE BEING CLUBBED FOR NO APPARENT REASON* AT MY DAD'S SIDE I NOTICED THAT ALL HELL HAD BROKEN LOOSE. I WAS CLUBBED IN THE HEAD A COUPLE OF MORE TIMES. NEXT THING I KNEW, KNEES WEAK, LOSING BODY CONTROL, I FELL TO THE GROUND. MY DAD SAW THE BLOOD RUNNING DOWN MY FACE AND TRIED TO HELP ME TO MY ROOM. THE GUARDS, STILL BEATING PEOPLE, WOULDN'T LET MY DAD TAKE ME TO MY ROOM, SO STEVE TOOK ME, SET ME ON THE FLOOR AND CHECKED OUT MY WOUNDS."

E. RICHARD SMITH (U.S. CIT.) CREWMAN:

"THEY APPROACHED ME AND SEVERAL OTHERS AND COMMANDED AT GUN POINT TO RAISE OUR HANDS OVER OUR HEADS AND SIT ON THE FORWARD DECK. I WITNESSED AT THIS TIME MANY OF THE CREW BEING BEATEN AND TAKEN ALSO TO THE BOW OF VESSEL. I MYSELF WAS BEATEN OVER THE
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AREA OF MY BACK, ARMS, AND KICKED ON THE LEGS."

F. ISIS LIONEL TORRES (PANAMANIAN) CREWMAN:

"UNO DE LOS GUARDIAS ME GOLPEO EN LA CABEZA Y ME EMPUJO EN LA CUBIERTA DESPUES DE ESO ME DIJERON QUE PUSIERA LA MANO ARRIBA EN LA CABEZA Y ME GOLPEARON EN LOS BRAZOS DESPUES DE ESO ME DIJERON DE TODO Y DE LO QUE IBA A MORIR Y SIEMPRE GOLPEANDOME

POR TODO EL CUERPO."

G. JORGE AGUIRRE (PANAMANIAN) CREWMAN:

"UNOS GUARDIAS ME GOLPEARON ME HICIERON ACOSTAR LUEGO ME PEGARON CON EL RIFLE Y ME DIERON PATADAS EN TODO EL CUERPO Y EL CUELLO."

H. EZEQUIEL CANO CALONCH (PERUVIAN) CREWMAN:

"Y DESPUES ME PEGARON CON PALO Y FUSIL A COLATAZOS, PEGARON EL LAS RODIALAS CON PALO Y ME COLATAZO EL LA OREJA ME CAI AL PISO Y CUANDO MI LEVANTY MI DIERON MAS PATADAS Y PALO EN TODO EL CUERPO."

I. WAYNE SIMON (TRINIDADIAN) CREWMAN:

"AT ABOUT 11:30 2 SPEED BOATS CAME WITH ABOUT 40 GUARDS AND BEGAN SHOOTING CRAZY IN THE AIR AND INTO THE DECK. I WAS STANDING ON THE STARBOARD SIDE WITH A ROPE IN MY HAND TRYING TO TIE UP THE SPEEDBOAT AND 2 GUARDS CAME UP, PUSHED THEIR RIFLES IN MY STOMACH, AND TOLD ME TO GO DOWN TO THE DECK WITH MY HANDS UP IN THE AIR. A SHOT WENT OFF RIGHT TO MY SIDE, A FEW INCHES AWAY. THEY TOLD ME TO SIT DOWN WITH MY HANDS ON MY HEAD. IN THE SPACE OF A SECOND THEY STARTED BEATING ME ALL OVER WUTH RIFLE BUTTS AND CLUBS AND WITH THE RIFLE THEY BEAT ME ON THE SHOULDER AND DISLOCATED IT. THEY KICKED ME IN THE BACK, ALSO I FELL AND STARTED ROLLING AND THEY STARTED STOMPING ON MY STOMACH. THE PETTY OFFICER, ESPECIALLY, WAS BEATING ME WITH A RIFLE BUTT ON MY SHOULDER, ON MY HEAD WITH A CLUB, KICKING ME IN THE BACK, STOMACH, AND RIBS AND CALLING ME 'AMERICANO', 'AMERICANO'."

J. LITTON THOMAS (JAMAICAN) CREWMAN:

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"IMMEDIATELY AFTER, THE GUARDS ROUNDED UP THE CREW ONTO THE FAR DECK, INCLUDING THE CAPT., AND THEN THEY STARTED TO BEAT US WITH THEIR CLUBS AND GUN BUTTS. THEN THE PETTY OFFICER ASKED WHERE WE WERE FROM, BUT DIDN'T GIVE ME ENOUGH TIME TO ANSWER. HE THEN TOOK A PIECE OF 2X4 BOARD AND CALLED ME A 'BLACK SON OF A BITCH' AND THEN BEGAN HITTING ME OVER MY CHEST AND SHOULDERS WITH THE 2X4. ALSO, HE KICKED ME IN THE SIDE, STOMACH, AND HEAD. HE AND THE OTHER GUARDS BEAT UP THE OTHER CREW MEMBERS THE SAME WAY - WITH GUN BUTTS, CLUBS, AND STICKS."
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Message Attributes

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